

Chapter Three: Analysis of City Services

Section One: Police

FY 2005 County Police Rebate	\$ 2,556,903
County Cost Rebate Estimate	\$ 3,288,243
City Cost Rebate Estimate (with administration and capital expenditures)	\$ 4,511,981
Actual City Expenditure (excludes general administration and capital expenditures)	\$ 4,430,447

Background

The City of Takoma Park is one of four municipalities in Montgomery County that maintains a municipal police department² and the only one to maintain a full-service municipal police force. The Takoma Park Police Department (TPPD) provides patrol, communications (dispatch), criminal investigation and special events support services.

The Takoma Park Police Department maintains an authorized strength of 41 sworn officers. It relies on the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) for additional support in limited circumstances, particularly when highly specialized response or investigative expertise is required.³ The Montgomery County Police Department deploys some 1,200 police officers throughout the County.

Takoma Park's responsibility for primary police coverage within the boundaries of the City began in 1949 when Takoma Park and Montgomery County initialed an agreement for the City to assume responsibility for response to calls for service. Today three agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the City Takoma Park and Montgomery County govern the operational relationship between the TPPD and the MCPD. These documents are:

- The Operational MOU, which describes the working relationship between the two departments;
- The Rebate MOU, which provides the formula governing County reimbursement of the City for police service the County is relieved of providing; and
- The Emergency Management MOU, which details the operations that would exist in the event of a declaration of a state of emergency.

Under state law, the County reimburses the City based on the level of service the *County would provide* were it exclusively responsible for providing police service in Takoma Park. The rebate does

² Police departments are maintained by the municipalities of Takoma Park, Rockville, Gaithersburg and Chevy Chase Village.

³ Specialized expertise maintained by the Montgomery County Police Department includes a high-risk entry team (SWAT), hostage negotiation assistance, hazardous materials crime scene search capability, and reconstruction know-how in the investigation of fatal auto accidents. Montgomery County is also capable of providing additional manpower, although this is rarely requested by Takoma Park.

not equal the actual cost the City presently incurs for police service. The final determination on the size of the County rebate, if any, rests with the County -- with no official recourse available to the City. This is the defining framework for all duplicative services provided by the City and County, regardless of the size of the tax bill that City residents pay to the City and the County.

The police rebate MOU requires the County and the City to meet and discuss the rebate formula every three years, or as requested by either party. The County and the City signed the current rebate MOU in January 2003.

Policing in Takoma Park is a large budget item. In FY05, the City budgeted \$4,430,447 for police services, representing nearly one-third of the City budget. The City received approximately \$2.5 million⁴ from Montgomery County to offset the duplicative payment by City residents of taxes to the County for police services. This is the largest County rebate received by the City in any duplicative service area, representing 77 percent of the total rebate monies received by the City. It offsets 56.4 percent of the City's expenditures on police services.

Thus, despite the relative size of that payment, it still means that Takoma Park residents ultimately pay twice as much for City police service than what they would pay if Montgomery County were the exclusive provider of police service to Takoma Park – at least according to the County and its administration of the rebate formula that generates the County's offset payment.

The current rebate formula reflects the amount the County would spend to provide police services to the City based on:

- The number of calls for service the City receives;⁵
- The County salaries of patrol officers and sergeants; and
- The County's costs for the operation and maintenance of its police vehicles

For FY05, this results in the County's payment of:

- Salaries, benefits and equipping of 28 patrol officers, 2 criminal investigation officers, and 3 sergeants,⁶ and

⁴ Two overall calculations determine the County's rebate for police services. State and County law (Article 81, Section 32A, of the State Annotated Code and Montgomery County Code 30A, by Resolution 9-1752 of the County Council) require the County to pay an amount that is 0.048 per \$100 of the assessed property in Takoma Park for police services. In FY05, that calculation yielded \$453,810 as payment by Montgomery County to Takoma Park for police services. Because that calculation so inaccurately represents the attributed costs of County police coverage, Montgomery County and Takoma Park since 1996 have devised a supplemental rebate, based upon the formula contained in a negotiated memorandum of understanding. In FY05 that amount was \$2,061,000.

⁵ The Takoma Park Police Department responded to approximately 20,000 calls for service in 2004. This number has decreased over the last three years, as have the number of reported crimes in the City. In its determination of the police rebate, the County applies a complex formula to the number of calls for service in Takoma Park, taking into account the severity of the underlying incident and other factors, arriving at an annual aggregate "weighted workload" for the department.

⁶ The County rebate reimburses the City for the salary of 33 patrol officers; the Takoma Park Police Department retains an authorized level of 41 sworn department positions. The City currently employs seven investigators.

- \$7,594 in patrol vehicle costs.⁷

In addition, the County has agreed to return \$121,738 to the City for its expenditures in the hiring of school crossing guards.

Rebates are paid by Montgomery County to the City of Takoma Park once a year based on the audited figures from two years prior, without a price index adjustment.⁸

As reflected in the table below, the city has spent nearly \$2 million more for the delivery of police services in FY05 than it receives from the County as reimbursement for duplicative police service. The City's net costs for police service represent a significant expenditure, representing 29 percent of the City's total FY05 expenditures.

Table 4. FY05 Takoma Park Police Department Budget and Rebate Allocation

Service	Budget	Rebate	Net Expenditure
Office of the Chief	432,445	-0-	432,445
Communications	348,645	-0-	348,645
Operations (Patrol)	2,419,851	1,829,000	590,851
Criminal Investigations & Witness Services	573,667	232,000	341,667
Administrative Services	655,839	-0-	655,839
County Code Specified Rebate		453,810	
Totals	\$ 4,430,447	\$ 2,514,810	\$ 1,915,637

The Committee believes that the \$2 million additional cost that Takoma Park residents pay for police service is due to two primary factors:

- The City of Takoma Park's conscious choice to provide police service that is more community-oriented and labor-intensive than the level of police service provided by Montgomery County; and
- The failure of the County to adequately recognize in its police rebate additional costs associated with what it would comprehensively spend were the County to extend police coverage to Takoma Park.

Options

In light of the above, two broad sets of options are available to the City.

⁷ The rebate for police vehicles is based upon an amortized value of the County's police vehicles, plus annual costs of maintenance, fuel and other costs. The City anticipates the County's FY06 reimbursement for patrol vehicles to be considerably higher -- \$12,345 -- due to the County's installation of PS2000 computer and communications equipment in its cars.

⁸ For example, the FY05 rebate is based on actual costs from FY03.

The *rebate reconciliation* options focus upon mutual corrective effort by the County and the City to assure that the underlying rebate formula more accurately reflects the County's entire attributed costs associated with the patrol, communications/dispatch and criminal investigative coverage.

After the County rebate is appropriately corrected, it also is helpful to identify those additional options that could bring further police cost-savings to the City through alternative delivery of certain police services to Takoma Park. The *alternative service delivery* option focuses on the potential transfer of certain Takoma Park police services to the County, thereby reducing City costs associated with its administration of a full-service police department.

Rebate Reconciliation

This option involves the City's more intensive pursuit of rebate coverage in certain areas of duplicative police costs. The Committee finds that the County rebate formula for police services does not sufficiently recognize the full range of costs associated with its patrol and criminal investigative services.

Specifically, the Committee finds that the County formula does not adequately recognize:

- County police patrol costs;
- County police overtime costs;⁹
- County police administration costs;¹⁰
- County communications costs;
- County police facility costs ;
- County police supervisory and command costs;¹¹
- County costs related to consumable materials; and
- Patrol incident follow-up costs.¹²

⁹ The current rebate formula does not take into account County police overtime costs, which are driven by considerable understaffing of the MCPD police force. The County Executive's FY06 budget request for 50 additional police officers each year for the next five years acknowledges County police understaffing.

¹⁰ A recent study commissioned by the City of Rockville estimated that County police administration costs associated with patrol operations increase the total patrol costs as much as 59%. *Policing the City of Rockville – A Study of Alternatives for the Provision of Police Patrol*, MAXIMUS, Inc., January 2004, at 58.

¹¹ The county rebate includes only Sergeants in their reimbursement formula for command staff. The span of control and shift assignments necessary for adequate County coverage of Takoma Park suggests that one or more lieutenant positions would be necessary, along with partial oversight by higher command levels.

¹² The County uses a "weighted workload" approach toward measurement of how much police effort – and ultimately dollars – are involved in police response to calls for service in Takoma Park. The weighted workload approach looks at the number of calls for service that the City receives and then calculates the amount of first-responder effort the County would have provided, based on the severity of the crime, need for back-up units and scene commander, etc..

Exploring Alternatives to City Delivery of Services

As noted above, the city currently spends nearly \$2 million more for the delivery of police services than it receives from the County as reimbursement for the City's delivery of police services. Even when the City receives an equitable County rebate that takes into account the areas described above, it is unlikely that the increase in revenue would entirely offset the City's police expenditure, due to economies of scale associated with the maintenance of a full-service police department and distinctive differences between City/County coverage.

Additional savings, however, could come about through a range of options of alternative police delivery services, including:

- Reductions in City police staffing and services, particularly reductions in response to certain kinds of service calls currently satisfied by the City;
- Shared responsibility for police service between the City and County; and
- The City's transfer of responsibility for the delivery of police service to the County

These options are described below.

Reductions in Takoma Park Police Service

The reduction of any governmental service always raises concerns. And the prospect of a reduction in police services – resulting in the public perception that personal and community safety may be endangered – may be especially problematic.

However, if Takoma Park residents are paying nearly twice as much for City police service than they would pay if Montgomery County were providing police services to Takoma Park, at least according to current County calculations, then it may be useful at the very least for the City to more thoroughly examine what the County level of police service embodies and whether that level of service represents an acceptable or unacceptable level were it applied to Takoma Park.

For example, the Montgomery County Police Department maintains a telephone call center to receive citizen reports of certain types of non-violent incidents (for example, non-violent auto theft) that MCPD considers do not require an immediate on-scene police response. The service call center prepares the report of the incident and enters it into MCPD's tracking system; follow-up on-scene investigative response by MCPD may or may not be required. The Takoma Park Police Department, on the other hand, dispatches one or more officers to nearly all calls for service to provide an immediate on-scene presence and also requires the patrol officer to provide any immediate investigative attention, if required and spend additional time writing-up the incident report.

If Takoma Park were to reduce its on-scene response to certain kinds of calls for service and instead handle calls for service in a manner similar to MCPD, that route is likely to result in savings, but

However, the County does not take incident follow-up activity into account. The Rockville police study estimated that police work unit time can increase by as much as 50 percent when incident follow-up activity is counted.

at what cost to resident satisfaction with policing in Takoma Park? Takoma Park residents are accustomed to an attentive “personal” style of police coverage that is an integral part of the City’s community-oriented policing strategy. The balance between costs and community policing should be more carefully studied to identify potential realignments in service coverage that minimally disrupt neighborhood policing and the integration of the police in the community.

Shared Responsibility for Police Service with the County

As noted previously, the City of Takoma Park is the only municipality in Montgomery County to operate and maintain a full-service police force, providing patrol, communications (dispatch), criminal investigation and special events support services. Rockville, Gaithersburg and Chevy Chase Village each rely significantly upon the County for police protection. Takoma Park’s reliance upon and collaboration with the County is much more limited. Interestingly, while Rockville and Gaithersburg possess populations three times larger than Takoma Park’s -- and square mileage more than five times greater -- both Rockville and Gaithersburg maintain a shared responsibility with Montgomery County for police services within their respective municipal boundaries.¹³ Montgomery County, however, does not reimburse Rockville, Gaithersburg or Chevy Chase Village for the police services that each municipality provides.¹⁴

The sharing of policing responsibility by the City of Rockville with Montgomery County relies upon Rockville’s performance of patrol services and the County’s receipt of 911 calls and the primary dispatch of Rockville police officers in response. Rockville assumes responsibility for the more community-oriented and personal aspects of policing with an emphasis on comprehensive community service, emphasizing positive, non-confrontational engagement by its police with residents of the community.

Rockville maintains a non-emergency dispatch operation and City dispatchers conduct record and warrant checks, after-hours dispatching for the City’s public works department, and monitoring of all City facility alarms. City dispatch officers handle front desk inquiries, such as walk-in complaints, and motor vehicle checks are performed by both Rockville and County officers. The Criminal Investigations Section operates as a group of investigative generalists utilizing knowledge of the local areas to resolve frequently occurring crimes not requiring extensive specialized training. The County police department provides investigative resources for major crimes and motor vehicle accidents resulting in fatalities.

According to a consultant study of the Montgomery County and Rockville police, the Montgomery County Police Department regards the Rockville police force as an excellent source of

¹³ To provide for adequate coverage, MCPD now maintains a separate district for Gaithersburg.

¹⁴ More recently, the City of Rockville has expressed concern about the fairness of the lack of any reimbursement by Montgomery County for its police services. A study in January 2004 for the City of Rockville by MAXIMUS, Inc., a consulting firm, concluded that a significant tax inequity on duplicative police coverage by Rockville existed, warranting the County’s return of at least \$1,757,364 to Rockville in recognition of the savings that the County receives from Rockville’s police services. The study also examined whether Rockville should expand its police force from a shared-force relationship with the County to one in which Rockville assumed all patrol duties. The study recommended that the City of Rockville refrain from expanding its police department to provide exclusive patrol services, [u]nless it is able to gain a significant portion of its tax payments that are now going to the County to fund patrol by County officers in Rockville ...” *Policing the City of Rockville – A Study of Alternatives for the Provision of Police Patrol*, MAXIMUS, Inc., January 2004, at 3.

intelligence about crime patterns and repeat offenders, information that is readily exchanged due to the day-to-day interaction between the MCPD and Rockville police. This provides for tracking of Part 1 crimes, sex offenses, weapons violations, drug offenses and even vandalism problems. Concurrent use of the same radio system by the MCPD and the RPD also provides for helpful information exchange, especially on activity adjacent to the Rockville boundaries. The consultant study compared the degree of MCPD collaboration with the Takoma Park police and noted that some MCPD officers observe that they are “may be missing important intelligence about such things as crime spillover because Takoma Park is now a completely separate department.”¹⁵

The relatively successful experience of shared responsibility for police services between the cities of Rockville, Gaithersburg and Chevy Chase Village and Montgomery County warrant Takoma Park’s serious examination of the prospect of shared policing coverage by Takoma Park and the County. Takoma Park-Montgomery County police partnerships could involve, for example, shared TPPD/MCPD patrol coverage in the City, integrated communications (dispatch) responsibility, as well as the assumption of primary criminal investigation responsibility by Montgomery County. Each of these areas, the Committee believes, should be explored with attention to their benefits and costs. While the savings to the City of Takoma Park could be attractive, the dimensions of shared City-County police responsibility are complex. The change in the character of the police coverage and police interaction with Takoma Park residents could pose significant changes. Regardless, so long as the City of Takoma Park continues to provide substantial police coverage to Takoma Park in ways that reduce the County’s police burden, the City’s entitlement to a fairly valued County rebate for police services should remain undisturbed.

The Committee devoted particular attention to the merits and savings associated with two partnership options: greater integration by the City and County of police communications and patrol dispatch responsibility, as well as the potential transfer by the City of primary criminal investigation responsibility to the County. These two options are described below.

Police Communications (Dispatch)

The City’s police department maintains a 24-hour communications function, dispatching TPPD patrol units to calls within the City, conducting records and warrant checks, receiving front desk inquiries and maintaining round-the-clock reception and building security role at the Municipal Building. The Department employs six full-time dispatchers and currently has a vacancy of two dispatchers and one supervisor. Salary costs associated with TPPD dispatch personnel in FY05 are \$349,000.

The potential transfer by the City of Takoma Park of police communications and dispatch responsibility to Montgomery County would involve the City’s principal reliance upon the Montgomery County Police Department’s communications system, including the County’s receipt of calls for service and dispatch of Takoma Park patrol officers to incidents in Takoma Park. It would set aside the City’s use of its current radio console and rely upon the County’s current radio communication and dispatch system for the dispatch of City’s officers and patrol cars. Communications work station linkage by TPPD command with the County and other jurisdictions, as well as contact with TPPD officers and patrol cars, would be retained.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 37.

The transfer to MCPD of Takoma Park's police dispatch coverage would involve staffing and technological realignments. Six police dispatchers are currently employed by TPPD. Cost savings could be accrued through the elimination of their positions. However, their performance of additional non-dispatch-related administrative responsibilities for TPPD, as well as the provision of after-hours front desk reception for the municipal building, would need to be absorbed by current or additional staff.

The technological implications of dispatch transfer are more considerable. If the City continues to *retain* police communications and dispatch responsibility, it faces upgrade and maintenance costs in the short run. The software and hardware associated with the TPPD radio console is becoming increasingly outdated and limited in the services it can provide. If the TPPD retains its dispatch capability, it faces costs up to \$90,000 to update the radio console, particularly to integrate it with the County's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Record Management System (RMS). The precise upgrade costs will be defined ultimately by the level of integration with the County that the City pursues. Transfer of TPPD dispatch responsibility to the County would permit the City to avert a significant amount of that upgrade expense.

The Committee believes that the cost-savings associated with TPPD's transfer of dispatch responsibility to the County warrant further in-depth study. This is a complex issue, but one that could provide financial benefits to the City if realignment of the communications function maintains or improves the operational capability of Takoma Park's police force.

Criminal Investigation Division (CID)

The CID has responsibility for responding to and investigating all Part I offenses (murder, rape, robbery, burglary, etc.) The TPPD deploys seven officers for this function with an operating cost for FY05 of \$574,000. Montgomery County's police rebate provides \$232,000 to the City of Takoma Park for criminal investigative services. This means that the City expends \$342,000 more for detective and criminal investigative work than it would be required to spend, according to County rebate calculations, were the County to assume responsibility for some of the criminal investigative services in Takoma Park.

The transfer of *partial* criminal investigative responsibility to MCPD for incidents occurring in Takoma Park would build upon the considerable expertise and resources the County maintains in the investigation of homicides, rape, major narcotics, sex crimes, and other crimes. The transfer of criminal investigative responsibility by the City to Montgomery County for some crimes would not eliminate all seven positions in the TPPD criminal investigation division. The TPPD's maintenance of a streamlined criminal investigation unit would retain TPPD responsibility for burglaries, street robberies, theft and auto theft, with responsibility held by one or more Station or District Detectives on the Takoma Park force. The Station or District Detective position is an eligible position for County reimbursement under the current rebate formula. Preservation of some criminal investigation responsibility within TPPD also would provide Takoma Park police officers with further incentive to remain with the Takoma Park force, offering experience and a 'piece of the action' in more interesting cases. City and County investigators already confer on some cases, sharing information on incidents potentially involving a serial perpetrator and other trends. According to TPPD officials, the City would still need to retain at least two officers and possibly a supervisor to handle Internal Affairs and EEO complaints and to follow-up on lesser offenses (Part II offenses).

Transfer of the Entirety of Police Operations to the County

As noted previously, police services in Takoma Park currently constitute nearly one-third of the entire City budget, and Takoma Park residents pay nearly twice as much for City-staffed police coverage than other Montgomery County residents pay, according to County rebate calculations. The case for equitably increasing the County's police rebate, the Committee believes, is considerable. If rebate enhancement or pursuit of the shared service delivery options detailed above cannot be achieved, then comprehensive assessment of all options includes one final choice. This involves the transfer of the entire police service responsibility from the City of Takoma Park to Montgomery County.

Obviously, this option is the most far-reaching, and it does not bear the endorsement of the Committee. However, the County could potentially provide *adequate* police services for the residents of Takoma Park – at a considerable cost savings to Takoma Park and its residents. Montgomery County's assumption of police responsibility would generate economies of size and a consistency of operation throughout much of the county.

No other municipality in Montgomery County similar to or greater in size to Takoma Park has ceded full control of policing to the County. This option could result in a reduction in personalized, community-oriented policing, loss of local control and increased response times to calls for service were MCPD to assume full control.¹⁶

Should the City consider exploration of this option because of its cost savings, it obviously would require extensive dialogue with the community about its implementation and implications.

Summary

The County rebate -- \$2.5 million in FY05 -- represents only about half of what the City spends on police services, in large measure because the County contends that it would not, in the absence of a municipal police force, provide the same level of protection and services that the City currently provides.

The Committee offers the following recommendations regarding police services, which may generate about \$1 million annually:

- The City should seek a higher rebate from the County for costs currently not fully recognized by the County, including those associated with:
 - Police patrol and follow-up
 - Administration
 - Facilities
 - Supervisory and command personnel
 - Communications

¹⁶ The average response time for calls received by the Takoma Park Police Department is three minutes; the Montgomery County Police Department patrol deployment design standard is seven minutes.

- Other areas

- The City should seek a larger portion of the State Police Grant.
- The City should investigate the option of a “shared patrol” police force, modeled on the arrangements currently existing in Rockville, Gaithersburg and Chevy Chase Village, in which city officers handle the “personal” aspects of policing while the County handles major crimes and fatal accidents.
- The City should investigate the option of transferring all or some of the duties for “911” communications and dispatch to the County.
- The City should investigate the option of transferring a portion of its criminal investigation responsibility to the County.

The Committee also considered other options, including the transfer of all police services to the County for a savings of approximately \$2 million annually, but the Committee did not recommend this option since it would result in a reduction in personalized services, local control and efficiencies such as response time.